



For Immediate Release:
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News Release

Utah's CHIP Open Enrollment Period Begins Nov. 12

(Salt Lake City, Utah) – Utah's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is celebrating its fourth year of providing health care coverage to Utah's uninsured children. Since 1998, CHIP has covered nearly 55,000 Utah kids and today enrollment is at 20,685 children. The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) will be accepting applications during the next CHIP Open Enrollment period on November 12 – 22, 2002. The UDOH will accept all eligible Utah children who apply during the two-week period.

CHIP is "A Good Call for Kids" and families can learn more by making a simple call to **1-877-KIDS-NOW**, to receive a mailed application or to find a UDOH eligibility office in their area. Beginning Nov. 12 and ending Nov. 22, applications will be accepted in person, online at www.health.utah.gov/chip or by mail postmarked by November 22.

CHIP is a state health insurance plan for children whose families cannot afford private health insurance. Approximately 6.8 percent of Utah's children are without health care coverage. Children under the age of 19 who are U.S. citizens or legal residents and who are not currently covered by health insurance may qualify. To be enrolled, families must meet eligibility guidelines based on family size and income. For example, a family of four earning up to \$36,200 a year may qualify. Eligible families will also be required to pay premiums of up to \$25 every three months. Premiums and minimal co-payments make it possible to insure more children.

The UDOH capped enrollment in December 2001 due to state funding budgets. CHIP now has Open Enrollment sessions to better manage utilization within existing state and federal funds. The program has capacity to enroll more children again because approximately 51 percent of the families who leave CHIP end up receiving an employer-sponsored private health plan within one-year of enrolling in CHIP.

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“Some families go without health care coverage for their children because it is not offered by their employers or it is not affordable to them,” said Rod Betit, UDOH Executive Director. “I’m so pleased that so many Utah children have graduated to employer-sponsored coverage after being insured by CHIP during tough times.”

“CHIP is wonderful! It’s hard to find a job that offers health insurance that doesn’t cost your whole pay check,” says Misty Fresques, of West Valley City and the mother of two daughters on CHIP.

“Because medical care is often delayed without insurance, major medical problems result and children may suffer,” said Chad Westover, Director of CHIP and the UDOH Office of Children’s Insurance and Access Initiatives. “Comprehensive medical care with a focus on prevention will keep these kids from showing up in the emergency room with a serious condition that could have been prevented with a simple office visit.”

The next Open Enrollment session will be announced in the first quarter of 2003. The exact date will be determined by how many children enroll in November, the number who leave the program and available funding.

To reach uninsured families, the UDOH will launch a radio and TV “A Good Call for Kids” Campaign in November. Kids featured in the spots have benefited from CHIP health care coverage. Outreach will also be conducted in high-risk schools and communities. For more information, the public should visit www.health.utah.gov/chip or call **1-877-KIDS-NOW**.

